

STATEWIDE PROGRAM STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

Meeting Notes December 12, 2005

MEMBERS Kitty Gallagher, Lyn Parker Haas, David Mitchell, Clare Munat, Sue Powers,
PRESENT: Marty Roberts, and Jim Walsh

VDH/DMH Melinda Murtaugh, Frank Reed, and Terry Rowe
STAFF:

OTHERS: Anne Donahue

Clare Munat facilitated today's meeting.

Notes on Meeting of November 14

The notes were accepted as written.

Curriculum and Training Committee at the Vermont State Hospital (VSH): Goldie Watson

Goldie is looking for an outside resource (or resources) to conduct a course in therapeutic communication for VSH staff. At present, the State Hospital simply does not have enough staff to be able to teach any more courses. The two-hour classes in therapeutic communication are designed to meet once a week for five weeks. Ordinarily the classes would be offered once each year—although, currently, VSH is somewhat behind in its staff training so that two of the courses will probably be necessary this coming year. Marty Roberts suggested trying Woodbury College. Clare Munat said that she would like to attend a meeting of the Curriculum and Training Committee. (It meets on the second Monday of the month every other month.) Jim Walsh wanted more information on the training context at VSH, staff competencies, and the like. Goldie will send Melinda Murtaugh a list of competencies and courses offered, for distribution to Standing Committee members.

VSH Update: Terry Rowe

VSH Improvements. Terry provided copies of a document that she prepared for the Board of Health to summarize improvements at the State Hospital in areas that the Department of Justice found problematic. These improvements are limited to clinical areas (psychiatric, psychological, and social work); they do not cover other areas. The last page lists completed renovations at VSH amounting to approximately \$1 million so far. Seclusion and restraint have decreased over

the past year. Terry thinks that the decrease is in part because of NAPPI (Non-Abusive Physical and Psychological Intervention) training, in part also because of the presence of Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (VPS). Dr Simpatico chairs the Emergency Involuntary Procedures Reduction Program meeting, whose focus is addressing systemic issues involved with emergency procedures and ongoing efforts in this area.

Patient Representative at VSH. A representative for patients during grievances and complaints is a licensing requirement for the state as well as a requirement of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Terry has had discussions with Linda Corey, the Executive Director of VPS, about a patient representative at the State Hospital. Terry has also asked Wendy Beininger, the Assistant Attorney General assigned to the Division of Mental Health (DMH), to look to other states for a model. The patient representative would not be an employee of the hospital, Terry said.

Annual Safety Review. VSH has made an internal commitment to an annual safety review of the hospital's physical facility.

Other Concerns/Issues. Lyn Parker Haas asked what happened to the hospital's dilemma over the need for training space versus the desirability of keeping the library for patients' use. Terry replied that the State Hospital has 231 staff but only one training room. But the library will continue to be patients' space.

Marty asked if Terry is the end of the line for the complaints and grievance process. No, Terry said. A resolution may be appealed to the Commissioner of Health and then to an independent hearing officer if necessary. Outside these avenues, a patient can file a lawsuit at any time.

VSH posts policies on the Vermont Department of Health's Website. Comments received are also posted, along with the reasons why some suggestions are not accepted.

SPSC Membership

Kitty Gallagher's term will expire in January 2006. Clare asked Melinda Murtaugh to send Kitty a form for gubernatorial appointment; Clare will write a letter recommending Kitty's reappointment.

VSH Futures Update: Frank Reed

Subacute Psychiatric Facility in Vergennes. In a surprise move on November 29, city officials in Vergennes passed a resolution stating that "the City does not favor the proposed Sub-Acute Psychiatric Care Facility and asks that it not be established within the City of Vergennes." In response, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services Michael K. Smith issued a spirited official statement noting his deep disappointment in the action taken by the Mayor and City Council, his belief that "the facts don't support the Mayor's conclusions," and his hope that discrimination will not be permitted "to drive public policy, or prevent us from doing what is right." (See

attachment to these notes.) Two different initiatives have been undertaken to persuade the Vergennes community of the merits of the subacute facility: (1) a letter from Vermont Psychiatric Survivors offering to do a presentation/ public-education session on mental illness and (2) a request from the state for the city to host a forum to talk about the initiative. No dates for either of these potential events have been set. The board members of the Counseling Service of Addison County and the Howard Center for Human Services are also doing a lot of work with the Vergennes city fathers.

Advisory Committee. The VSH Futures Advisory Committee met on November 16 and unanimously adopted site and selection criteria for the primary VSH replacement service. (See attachment to these notes.) The Advisory Committee also recommended to AHS Secretary Smith that “planning for the Futures project, for both inpatient and community services, needs to occur in the context of considering the overall financial health of the Designated Hospital and Agency service providers.” Talks on zoning and related matters have begun with the Mayor of Burlington. An architect has been selected to do preliminary design work for the future inpatient facility. That work should be completed by April 29, 2006.

Public Comment: Anne Donahue

Conditional Voluntary Admissions. Former Standing Committee member Anne Donahue took the initiative to apprise Standing Committee members of the state's stance on Conditional Voluntary Admissions at designated hospitals. She informed the committee members that she had recently been involved in a meeting with Beth Tanzman, Wendy Beininger, Patti Barlow, A.J. Ruben, and Jack McCullough, in which a major policy decision had been announced by the Division of Mental Health pertaining to "Conditional Voluntary" admissions at Designated Hospitals without any input from the Standing Committee or other mental-health stakeholders. The policy position would be presented to the Designated Hospitals at their next meeting and would affect voluntary admissions for patients in the community. Anne wondered if the Division's policy position was even constitutional. Frank Reed was unfamiliar with any major shift in policy as identified, but offered to invite DMH central office staff who were involved in this meeting and knowledgeable about its outcome to attend the January Standing Committee meeting. Clare Munat remarked that the issues are new to her, but she will ask Paul Blake and Beth Tanzman for a copy of the policy and put the item on the January agenda.

Composition of Futures Advisory Committee. In Anne's view, all of the real work on the Futures Advisory Committee is done by working committees on which family members and consumers are not represented. Anne would like for DMH to be more aggressive in outreach to these stakeholders. Marty suggested notifying VPS and NAMI—VT, also local program standing committees. Lyn asked for a list or summary of the work groups available.

Update on Search for Director of Community Mental Health Services: Marty Roberts

Bill McMains is coordinating this process, Marty said, while a small work group is reviewing applications. Interviews will probably be scheduled early in the new year. Other members of the search committee besides Bill and Marty include Jim Walsh, Larry Lewack (the new Executive Director of NAMI—VT), Ken Libertoff, and Linda Corey.

Membership Committee Update

The VSH Governing Body has two vacancies for at-large members. One could be a consumer, while the other requires mental-health experience. The Standing Committee may look at Cynthia Welker again as a possible candidate. Clare will send e-mail to NAMI—VT members to see if any of them would be interested in serving on the Governing Body. Marty will contact Chandar Hall again about mailing her application to Frank Reed. *Counterpoint* also needs a board member from NAMI—VT.

DMH Updates: Frank Reed

Forensic Admissions to Designated Hospitals. The Division is working on a process to designate hospitals to accept forensic admissions. Three of the designated hospitals in Vermont are interested in accepting such admissions: Fletcher Allen Health Care, Rutland Regional Hospital, and the Windham Center. At this point, FAHC is the most prepared designated hospital for this program. To a question from Anne, Frank replied that the Legal Unit has been working with the district judges to help them understand the issues involved in these changes.

Mental-Health Issues Among Returning Veterans. Frank and Paul Blake went to a forum at the Veterans' Administration last week to talk about mental-health needs among veterans returning from the war in Iraq. At the moment, the VA does not anticipate high need for Vermont's public mental-health system from the veterans themselves but, rather, their families.

Program Review at Northeast Kingdom Human Services. NKHS has experienced a lot of administrative changes over the past couple of years, Frank said. Feedback from the community and stakeholders has been very positive in general. Marty added that NKHS has some strong programs—for example, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, a new Supported Employment grant, and Illness Management and Recovery. Anne asked about possible gaps in services in the Northeast Kingdom. Frank mentioned the lack of crisis beds. NKHS's hospitalization rate has gone up lately. David Mitchell made the observation that some of the admissions from the Northeast Kingdom to FAHC could have been avoided if the area had crisis beds.

Schedule for Designation Visits in 2006. Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont has been tentatively scheduled for a program review in February. The designation report is due in May. Kitty volunteered to be the Standing Committee representative at HCRS's program-review visit.

Washington County Mental Health Services is next, probably in April. The program review was done earlier this year, and so a briefer visit again may be in order.

The visit to Northwest Counseling and Support Services will be in March. Lyn Parker Haas volunteered for that one.

Finally, the report on Rutland Mental Health Services is due in November; the program review will probably be done in June. Jim Walsh offered to visit Rutland with the rest of the site review team from DMH's central office staff.

Peer-Operated Projects: Kitty Gallagher

Three new peer-operated projects have received funding from the federal mental-health block grant this year:

- ◆ Camp Initiative at Elfin Lake: a statewide multiday retreat, to focus on networking, sharing recovery stories and education, and developing connections with consumers around the state
- ◆ Peer Recovery Art Program: peer-run art classes and activities, based at the Black River Peer Recovery Center in Springfield
- ◆ Peer-Support Consumer Volunteer Program: (1) To provide training and supervision to peers at the Black River Peer Recovery Center on how to provide peer support and supportive counseling and (2) to pay trained peers as Peer Support Specialists at the Recovery Center

Ongoing initiatives include the computer program in Springfield, the Washington County Peer Educational Program at Washington County Mental Health Services in Montpelier, and the Mental Health Education Initiative in Chittenden County.

Public Comment

Anne expressed her view that the Board of Health should give VSH a provisional or conditional license when the Board meets on December 13 because the State Hospital does not meet requirements for certification by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Anne distributed copies of a draft letter to the Board of Health advocating that position.

Items for the Standing Committee Meeting on January 9

- ∞ Re-designation of Lamoille County Mental Health Services
- ∞ Conditional voluntary status at designated hospitals
- ∞ Discharge planning: Jo-Ellen Swaine and Tom Simpatico
- ∞ Community Links: Marty Roberts
- ∞ Information on VSH Futures subcommittees

- 82 Report from Search Committee for Director of Community Mental Health Services
- 82 Report from Membership Committee on recruitment for family and consumer members of Standing Committee—and yes, there is interest in another middle-management provider representative too